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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 002775

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2016

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SUBJECT: FAMILIAR FACES IN KUWAIT'S NEW CABINET; TWO
INFLUENTIAL MINISTERS ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION EXCLUDED

REF: A. KUWAIT 2602
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 2193
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 1832
[1](#)D. KUWAIT 1642

Classified By: CDA Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Amir Shaykh Sabah approved July 10 the new Cabinet proposed by Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al-Sabah. As is customary, the previous Cabinet resigned July 1 after the parliamentary elections (ref A). The new 16-member Cabinet, the 23rd since Kuwait gained independence in 1962, includes six members of the Al-Sabah family, three Islamists, two Shi'a, and one woman. The Cabinet will hold its first meeting on July 11 and is expected to be ceremonially sworn in during the first session of Parliament on June 12. The most significant change was the exclusion of former Minister of Energy Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al-Sabah and former Minister of State for Cabinet/National Assembly Affairs Mohammed Sharar. During the recent elections, both Ministers were sharply criticized for corruption and for blocking passage of an electoral reform proposal, and pro-reform MPs had threatened to "boycott" the Government if either was re-appointed. To some extent, their exclusion is a real victory for reformers and signals that the Government is seeking to avoid confrontation with the reformist bloc in the National Assembly, possibly even adopting elements of the anti-corruption, pro-electoral reform agenda.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) On the other hand, Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd's exclusion is unlikely to affect his overall power and influence. It is rumored that he will be appointed as head of the National Security Bureau to replace Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled, who was appointed Minister of Social Affairs and Labor. Due to his close connection to the Amir and his prominent position within the ruling family, Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd is likely to retain much of his influence and may work to split the fragile liberal-Islamist bloc at the heart of the pro-reform alliance in Parliament. Dr. Bader Al-Nashi, the Secretary General of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood, told Poloff that Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd "does the Amir's dirty work" and "could be more powerful outside the Government than within it." He also speculated that Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd's exclusion was only temporary and predicted that he would be re-appointed to a ministerial position in "a couple of years."

[1](#)3. (C/NF) There were few other major changes in the new Cabinet: one other Minister was replaced and several portfolios were switched. In addition, the Ministry of Planning was reportedly merged with the Higher Planning Council to create the new Public Authority for Planning, which is expected to be headed by Dr. Mohammed Al-Rumaihi, a

liberal academic. It is somewhat surprising that Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak retained the portfolios of both Interior and Defense, since it was widely assumed these would be separated again. The re-appointment of the controversial Mohammed Al-Sanousi as Minister of Information will likely draw strong criticism from pro-reform MPs who accused him of trying to close down several new independent satellite channels covering the elections (ref B). Despite the appointment of a rookie, pro-reform Member of Parliament (MP), Falah Al-Hajiri, as Minister of Commerce and Industry, the pro-reform bloc in Parliament is still likely to retain its majority with at least 33 seats. (Note: The Prime Minister is constitutionally required to appoint at least one MP as a Minister. The 16-member Cabinet votes as a bloc. End note.)

Details of New Cabinet

14. (C/NF) The Cabinet is as follows:

- Prime Minister: Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (no change)
- First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense: Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (no change)
- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs: Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (no change)
- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs: Dr. Ismail Khudhur Al-Shatti (Note: In the previous Cabinet, Al-Shatti was Minister of Communications. He was a senior member of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM),

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the political arm of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood, but was expelled in May after refusing to resign in protest over the Government's position on electoral reform (ref C). His elevation to Deputy Prime Minister may reflect the Amir's appreciation of his support. End note.)

- Minister of Energy: Shaykh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah (Note: In the previous Cabinet, Shaykh Ali was Minister of Social Affairs and Labor. He has considerable experience in the private sector, particularly in finance. End note.)
- Minister of Health: Shaykh Ahmed Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (no change)
- Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs: Abdul Hadi Al-Saleh (Note: Al-Saleh is one of two Shi'a Ministers. This portfolio was previously combined with the Cabinet Affairs portfolio and both were held by the allegedly corrupt Muhammad Sharar. End note.)
- Minister of Communications: Dr. Ma'souma Al-Mubarak (Note: In the previous Cabinet, Dr. Ma'souma was Minister of Planning and Minister of State for Administrative Development. She is one of two Shi'a Ministers, but remains the only woman in the Cabinet. End note.)
- Minister of Information: Mohammed Al-Sanousi (Note: Al-Sanousi was appointed to replace Dr. Anas Al-Reshaid who resigned in May in protest over the Government's position on electoral reform (ref D). Although he is a liberal, he was heavily criticized by pro-reform candidates and activists for attempting to block several new satellite channels' coverage of the recent elections (ref B). End note.)
- Minister of Finance: Bader Mishari Al-Humaidhi (no change)
- Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs: Bader Nasser Al-Humaidi (no change)
- Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education:

Dr. Adel Taleb Al-Tabtabaei (no change)

- Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs: Dr. Abdullah Abdul-Rahman Al-Ma'touq (no change)

- Minister of State for Municipality Affairs: Abdullah Saud Al-Muhailbi (no change)

- Minister of Social Affairs and Labor: Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (Note: Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled was previously the head of the National Security Bureau, Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and a Kuwaiti diplomat to the United Nations. End note.)

- Minister of Commerce and Industry: Falah Al-Hajiri (Note: Al-Hajiri is an independent Islamist and was elected to Parliament for the first time on June 29. He is the only MP in the Cabinet. End note.)

¶5. (U) Updated biographic information will soon be available on post's classified website.

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